

Paper

November 16, 1956

Dear Ken:

Thank you for letting me see this. You did a good job in showing what mischief can be done by a rigid application of the rules. It seems to me that nomenclature is a topic in law, rather than in biology.

It seems to me that you can't possibly give the taxon of an imperfect the same status as that of a perfect form. Why keep a dual terminology at all? There is no reason why traditional imperfect names can't be kept as trivial names: why does it have to be Fusarium rather than fusarium, if there is some merit in keeping it at all? Then you need a rule to decide which name to adopt when both the perfect and imperfect have had some standing. The rule that gives priority to the first valid perfect name surely was intended to cover cases where the ambiguity resulted from ignorance of identity. But you can't set up a rule of law on intentions

As you know, the dual nomenclature is a reductio ad absurdum-- and a painful one for students at that. But if you can't buck the fundamentals, then you can ask for exceptions, as you have, for the most odious cases. I don't disagree with you at all as to your objectives, but I think situations like Eurotium are a certain consequence of the existing code. I'm glad I'm not a mycologist, so this sort of thing gives as much mirth as tears: I'm sure it doesn't to you.

Sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg